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NEWS

Winchester continues support for Aidan McElhinney, family after traumatic brain injury

NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY | STAFF WRITER

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Aidan McElhinney, left, with mom Kendra Winner during graduation from the fifth grade. COURTESY PHOTO/KENDRA WINNER

It was a short trip to Winchester, one Aidan McElhinney had mad
But it was a cold winter night and a patch of black ice caused the

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old's car to skid and crash.

A month later, Aidan is still at Lahey Hospital, the Level 1 Trauma Center he was taken to following the accident. And while there have been some small improvements in his recovery, there's still a lot of uncertainty as to what the final outcome will be.

"The hardest part is not knowing," said Aidan's mom, Kendra Winner. "We just don't know anything. The range of recovery is enormous. What if he's like this for the rest of his life? We just don't know what the best possible outcome is."

Aidan McElhinney, far right, with a group of friends he's known since kindergarten and third grade during a visit to their elementary school during the Winchester High School graduation in 2023. COURTESY PHOTO/KENDRA WINNER

A student at Pace University in New York, Aidan was on his way to
friend's home in Winchester in the early morning hours of Dec. 2
his car hit black ice. He was immediately taken to Lahey, where he has

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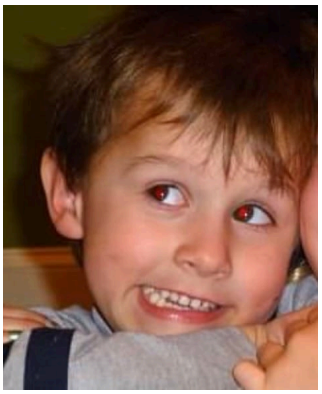
undergone at least seven surgeries to date and is still suffering from multiple traumatic brain injuries.

Winner said below the neck, Aidan has made remarkable recovery. On Jan. 22, Aidan was even lifted into a chair in order to keep his muscles from atrophying. But he is not conscious.

“The body is healing,” Winner said. “The problem is with the neuro assessments. With the brain, healing is a real roller coaster. There are good days and bad days.”

Part of the good is that Aidan is spending more time off the ventilator.

“Everyone is pleased with his stamina,” Winner said. “They don’t foresee a problem with him getting off the ventilator for a long time.”



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Aidan McElhinney's mother Kendra Winner shares some of her favorite photos of the 18-year-old. COURTESY PHOTOS/KENDRA WINNER

But, she added, depending on who you talk to, it's a toss-up as to how Aidan might heal.

"His therapist says given his age, it would be a surprise if he didn't make progress," Winner said. "But the neurology team is preparing us to remain where we are."

Winner added that given Aidan's brain injuries, she's not sure a complete recovery is possible.

"I do think that's wishful thinking," she explained. "But it's clear to everyone that the brain is one of the last great frontiers."

So friends and family gather at the Surgical ICU at Lahey. Winner plays her son's music and talks to him.

"I want to reassure him," she said. "I don't want him to be afraid."

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Prom time! Aidan McElhinney and his friends get ready for the Winchester High School prom in 2023. COURTESY PHOTO/KENDRA WINNER

Community reaction

As news of Aidan's accident spread, it was inevitable that incorrect information was getting out so a website, The Caring Bridge, was

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a place where Winner and her family could put out reports about her son's condition.

And the reaction from everyone has been tremendous.

"People we don't even know are keeping tabs on Aidan on the Caring Bridge site," Winner said. "I've heard from his teachers along each step of his school career. People have been amazing. It's been honestly truly astonishing. I can't say enough about someone who might just send a heart. It's very encouraging."

Aidan McElhinney's friends get their heads shaved in solidarity after his first neurosurgery. From the left, Tyler, Leo and Kaden. COURTESY PHOTOS/KENDRA WINNER

Winner compared the situation to living in a bubble, where the only focus is on Aidan. But the support has been incredibly meaningful, she said, especially knowing that Aidan is in people's hearts.

"Just the support of everyone, people who know us and those who don't know us," she said.

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A GoFundMe has been set up for Aidan's medical expenses, which Winner said she is also grateful for, especially given she's received recent news that health insurance might only be able to cover Aidan's rehab recovery for two months.

"That just can't be right," Winner said. "I haven't had the opportunity to follow up on that, but it does raise the specter of the future. Aidan might never be the same, but we can never lose site of the fact that he survived something that many people haven't survived."

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Aidan McElhinney with mom Kendra Winner and sister Aislinn McElhinney during high school. COURTESY PHOTO/KENDRA WINNER

It's the uncertainty, she added, the not knowing and that's the scary part.

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"I see him making important progress," Winner said. "It's a helpful reminder that he still can make progress so I celebrate every win."

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Public safety data How Winchester compares on firearms licenses in comparable Massachusetts communities Active licenses as of Jan. 25, 2025 — Source: Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board License to carry firearms Firearms identification card Winchester and Marblehead are the focus communities. Peers selected based on comparable population size, demographics and suburban

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Sen. Jason Lewis, Mass. Senate strengthen fair housing protections for renters, buyers

The following was submitted by the Office of Sen. Jason Lewis: State Sen. Jason Lewis joined his colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate to pass legislation that protects residents from discrimination in the housing market as the Trump administration abandons its enforcement of the federal Fair Housing Act. Illegal discrimination continues

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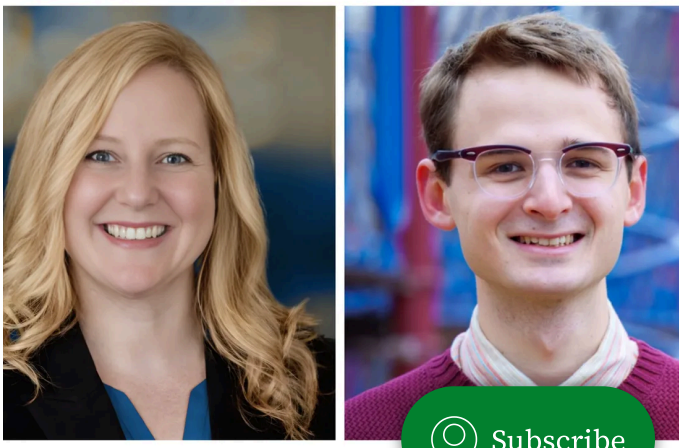

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FEATURES

'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

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Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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